

December 2, 1998

The Honorable Madeleine Albright
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

We write to you to urge the Clinton Administration to actively support an internationally-supervised referendum on self-determination for East Timor.

As churches and organizations with significant relationships with the churches and people of East Timor, we continue to hear of their plight, stemming from the illegal occupation of the territory since 1975 and the related instances of human rights violations, including detentions without charge, beatings, disappearances and, in some cases, acts of torture and even summary executions. Faced with this dire situation, the people of East Timor have reiterated to us the need for an internationally recognized referendum to enable them to determine their own future.

While reports of repressive acts continue to disturb us greatly, we have been encouraged also by the peaceful efforts of the vast majority of the Timorese people to assert their rights and continue to speak out for freedom and a nonviolent resolution of their territory's status. We are heartened by the voices of their leaders, such as Nobel Laureate Catholic Bishop Carlos Belo and The Rev. Arlindo Marcal of the Christian Church of East Timor, who persevere in their quest for an orderly decision-making process concerning East Timor's future.

In recent months we, in the United States, have supported and appreciated initiatives by the U.S. Congress to promote a referendum on self-determination. We note with gratification the Senate's adoption of a resolution (S. Res. 237) in this regard in July, the increased number of co-sponsors of a similar measure in the House (H. Con. Res. 258), and the language supporting this objective in the recently enacted Omnibus Appropriations Bill. Thus we recognize increasing support among our elected representatives in favor of self-determination for the East Timorese people.

Therefore, we urge you to make support for a referendum on self-determination for East Timor an official part of the nation's foreign policy. This policy should be manifest in a greater level of attention to this issue in bilateral discussions with relevant and concerned nations, as well as in the context of the United Nations as it takes up this matter through negotiations and through the General Assembly. Such a referendum should be achieved through an internationally-agreed timetable.

Towards that end, we also urge you to call for the release of all East Timorese political prisoners, and the placing of international monitors on the ground in East Timor to monitor the promised withdrawal/removal of Indonesian troops.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We would welcome an opportunity to share with you our views in detail.

Yours sincerely,

The Rev. Mark B. Brown
Assistant Director
Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Ken Butigan
Faculty
Franciscan School of Theology
Berkeley, California

Rev. John Chamberlin
Chairperson
National Council of Churches
East Timor Working Group

Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B.
Executive Director
BENETVISION

Rev. R. Randy Day
Senior Pastor
Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church
Ridgefield, Connecticut

Ann Delorey
Legislative Director
Church Women United

Rev. Michael Dodd
Director
Columban Fathers Justice and Peace Office

Rev. Eric A. Gass
Area Executive
Southern Asia Office
Common Global Ministries Board
United Church of Christ and
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Fr. Brian J. Grieves
Peace and Justice Ministries
The Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr. Michael Hahm
Executive Secretary,
Global Justice and Advocacy
General Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

Jaydee Hanson
Assistant General Secretary
Ministry of God's Creation
General Board of Church and Society
The United Methodist Church

Tom Hart
Director of Government Relations
Episcopal Church

Peggy Hutchison
Assistant General Secretary
Mission Contexts and Relationships
General Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Kathryn Johnson
Executive Director
Methodist Federation for Social Action

Rev. Fr. Ted Keating, SM
Director for Justice and Peace
Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of
Men

Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Bishop Ernest S. Lyght
New York Annual Conference
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Thomas R. Logsdon
Executive Secretary, Mission Personnel
General Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Jr.
Episcopal Church
New York, New York

Shalini Nataraj
Acting Director
International Program
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Kara Newell
Executive Director
American Friends Service Committee

Rev. Dr. Rodney Page
Deputy General Secretary
National Council of the Churches of Christ
in the U.S.A.

Rev. Dr. Albert M. Pennybacker
Associate General Secretary for Public Policy
National Council of the Churches of Christ
in the U.S.A.

Anna Rhee
Executive Secretary for Public Policy
Women's Division
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Peter Ruggere
Maryknoll Fathers, Brothers,
Sisters and Lay Missioners
Office of Social Concerns

Nancy Small
National Coordinator
Pax Christ USA

Bishop C. Joseph Sprague
Chicago Area
Northern Illinois Conference
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Max B. Surjadinata
Pastor
Mount Vernon Heights Congregational Church
Mount Vernon, New York

Bishop Melvin G. Talbert
California-Nevada Conference
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Larry Tankersley
Director
Southern Asia Office
National Council of the Churches of Christ
in the USA

Kathy Thornton, RSM
National Coordinator
NETWORK, a national Catholic
social justice lobby

Anne Unander
Executive Secretary
Community and Institutional Ministries
General Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Aart van Beek
Pastor
Parkview Presbyterian Church
Sacramento, California

Miriam A. Young
Executive Director
Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace
Washington, D.C.

cc: Mr. Stanley Roth, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs